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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, awe and wonder grip us when we reflect upon Your majesty. You are the source of our strength and provide our hope for years to come.

Guide our Senators today. May they seek Your marching orders and have the courage to follow the cadence of Your drumbeat. Give them the courage to act as well as to think, to do as well as to talk, and to accomplish Your will on Earth in all their work. Lead them, O God, to think with clarity, to love with honor, and to see the stamp of Your image in all Your creation.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 24, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUT ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 467, S. 3412, which is the Middle Class Tax Cut Act of 2012.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows. Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 467, S. 3412, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax relief to middle class families.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the first hour this morning will be divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans the final half. The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. today for weekly caucus meetings. At 3:40 this afternoon, there will be a moment of silence in memory of Officer Jacob J. Chestnut and Detective John Gibson of the U.S. Capitol Police, who were killed 14 years ago today in the line of duty defending this Capitol, the people who worked here, and the visitors against an armed intruder.

Yesterday, I filed cloture on the motion to proceed to the Middle Class Tax Act. If no agreement is reached, that vote will be tomorrow.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3420

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand that S. 3420 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3420) to permanently extend the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, to provide for the permanent alternative minimum tax relief, and to repeal the estate and generation-skipping transfer taxes, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this legislation at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the measure will be placed on the calendar.

TAX PROPOSALS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Republicans claim to share Democrats' commitment to keeping taxes low for the middle class, so it is very strange that, if that is what they believe, they have repeatedly blocked votes on our proposal to cut taxes for 98 percent of American families. Two weeks ago Republicans seemed eager to have those votes. That is what the Republican leader talked about here on the floor: They wanted to vote on our proposal to cut taxes for families making less than \$250,000 a year or 98 percent of Americans, and they wanted to vote on their competing proposal, which would actually raise taxes for 25 million families while handing out more tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires. Democrats have tried to give the Republicans what they wanted. We have offered to skip their usual procedural delays and hold up-or-down majority votes on both proposals. So far they have refused, but the offer still stands. If they want to vote on theirs and vote on ours, we will do it with a simple majority. So I hope the Republicans don't insist on doing this the hard way.

Why are Republicans delaying votes they asked for in the first place? They know a majority of Senators and a majority of Americans support our plan to help middle-class families. Our plan gives 114 million taxpayers—again, 98 percent of American families—certainty that their taxes won't go up, and it reduces the deficit by almost \$1 trillion by ending wasteful tax breaks for the rich.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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